

Florida Today Editorial
August 13, 2005

The week ending today was noteworthy in many respects, including the safe landing of the shuttle Discovery and still more U. S. troops killed in Iraq.

Those big stories grabbed the headlines, but other issues didn't escape our radar screen and deserve comment.

Brevard road money: When it comes to the federal budget, one man's pork is another man's bounty. That was certainly the case with the \$ 264 billion transportation bill President Bush signed into law.

Critics not without justification ripped the largesse of Congress and the White House for including more than 6,300 projects of dubious need that will cost taxpayers \$ 24 billion.

But there's no doubt about the importance of three Space Coast projects that received money and will help our worsening traffic problems.

They are \$ 10.4 million to build the extension linking the Pineda Causeway and Interstate 95, \$ 8 million to repair the deteriorating Max Brewer Bridge in Titusville, and \$800,000 for further study of the stalled but badly needed Palm Bay Parkway.

The Pineda extension and Palm Bay projects were funded thanks to hard work by Rep. Dave Weldon, R. Indialantic.

More condo mania: One trend in the red- hot national housing market that continues gathering steam is the conversion of apartment complexes into condos.

It's happening in Brevard as well, with more making the switch. That contains good and bad news for Space Coast residents.

On the plus side, some local condo prices are less than what it

would cost to buy a single- family home. That is allowing first-time buyers to enter the market and make a solid investment in the future.

But on the down side, many longtime apartment dwellers are getting forced out of their dwellings and finding it increasingly hard to find an affordable place to live.

That tells us lawmakers in Washington, Tallahassee and Brevard should do more to provide affordable housing funds for the worst hit, including seniors on fixed incomes and the strapped working poor.

Iran's nuclear quest: Last Saturday in this space, we used the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima to call for strong international cooperation to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

This week, Iran again showed why.

Tehran rejected a European proposal to end its nuclear program in exchange for economic incentives, and promptly restarted operations at a plant where uranium can be converted for nuclear weapons use.

Negotiations are continuing, but a possible move by the Bush administration and International Atomic Energy Agency to ask the U. N. Security Council to impose economic sanctions may be the only step left to take.

While the request could be vetoed by Security Council members Russia and China, which have close economic ties with Iran, it would send a strong signal that Tehran's actions will not be accepted.

Experts say Iran could have the bomb by the end of the decade, and only global unity may prevent that from happening.

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